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## RECENT BOOKS

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Reynolds, Clark G. *Navies in History*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1998. 267pp. \$35

Experienced writers know all too well that a short work about a big subject is much harder and more demanding to write than a long one. On the basis of more than forty years of study and writing about naval history, Clark Reynolds has written a very short book that traces four thousand years of naval history on all the oceans of the world. It is a remarkable achievement. Reynolds conceived this book as a “primer” and a “reconnaissance” for readers new to the field of naval history.

With ancient history summarized in a dozen pages, the American Civil War in fifteen, and World War II in thirty-four, the book is clearly designed to communicate with an American audience that ranges in age from teenagers and seaman apprentices to newly recruited officer candidates and congressmen from landlocked states. In this practical day and age, readers of this journal will find Reynolds’s volume particularly useful as something to recommend to beleaguered souls who need to know something about

naval history but can only accept it spoon-fed and in as few words as possible. In this book, Reynolds has made an admirable effort to reach them.

For those with more time for study and reflection, Reynolds’s little book is an updated synopsis of what he has written elsewhere. Serious students of naval history will benefit more from considering Reynolds’s detailed arguments. These may be found in *Command of the Sea: The History and Strategy of Maritime Empires* and in a volume of collected essays, *History and the Sea: Essays on Maritime Strategies*.



Tsouras, Peter G., ed. *The Greenhill Dictionary of Military Quotations*. Mechanicsburg, Penna.: Stackpole Books, 2000. 574 pp. \$75

“It is a good thing for an uneducated man to read books of quotations” (Winston Churchill, under “Quotations and Maxims,” page 395). Lieutenant Colonel Tsouras, USAR (Ret.), hopes it will also be good for “the aspiring soldier, as well as the military professional and

enthusiast.” Indeed, Tsouras relates how General James Wolfe in 1758, having adroitly driven the French before Louisburg into their defenses, was exasperated that “our friends here are astonished at what I have done because they have read nothing”; Wolfe had found his maneuver in Xenophon. With this book Tsouras (a senior analyst at the U.S. Army National Ground Intelligence Center and the author of three books on World War II and the American Civil War) updates his *Warriors’ Words*, adding 2,400 quotations (for a new total of 5,943), as well as indices (now three) and categories (now 485).



Pitch, Anthony S. *The Burning of Washington: The British Invasion of 1814*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1998. 298pp. \$32.95

Anthony Pitch has written a flowing, vivid description of the events surrounding the British assault on Washington in the final stages of the War of 1812. Residents of the Washington, D.C., area will particularly enjoy Pitch’s evocative account of those times, making associations with local landmarks as they follow the British march in Maryland from Benedict to Nottingham and on to Upper Marlboro, Woodyard, Bladensburg, and the District of Columbia. As Pitch demonstrates, it was an exciting, if ignominious, moment in American history, but one offset by the events that followed shortly thereafter at Baltimore’s Fort McHenry. Pitch’s lively style is buttressed by his assiduous historical research in twenty archival collections in the United States, where he paid particular attention to

finding new and previously unused personal accounts.

Marley, David F. *Wars of the Americas*:



*A Chronology of Armed Conflict in the New World, 1492 to the Present*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1998. 722pp. \$99

In this handsomely produced reference work, David F. Marley (who has also produced other works for the same publisher) has taken an unusual “slice” through history: all the conflicts not of an era but of the Western Hemisphere. The unfamiliarity of this perspective for North American readers is brought home by the fact that the section covering the American Civil War is (if the longest) only one entry of eighty-six. The sections comprise brief overviews followed by subentries under variously specific dates (“LATE 1639. A slave revolt erupts around Mount Misery . . .”). The sections in turn are grouped chronologically by era, the first covering the discovery and conquest by the Europeans (who, as the preface notes, found the hemisphere “already embroiled in warfare”).

The book is uniquely valuable as a source on events that many of its users might otherwise find difficult to research. Moreover, readers for whom, say, the War of the Cakes (1838–9) is obscure may learn for the first time in consulting *Wars of the Americas* how great was the price paid on all sides for the European settlement of Latin America and for the liberation and consolidation of the nations that grew up there.

Index, list of sources for further reading, maps, and numerous period works of art.



Thomas, David A. *Battles and Honours of the Royal Navy*. Conshohocken, Penna.: Combined Publishers, 1998. 326pp. \$46.95.

This very useful reference (in effect an updating of *A Companion to the Royal Navy*, Harrap, 1988) is advisably titled—that is, it aims at a comprehensive listing of the Royal Navy’s battles, not just its formal battle honors, as acknowledged by the Admiralty. All the “honours” are here, even some fought before the navy became officially “royal” in 1660, as well as a few apparent (to the author) errors. However, RN battle honors are defined in ways that exclude a number of actions that have been important to the service or to the course of history. For instance, they are given only for Royal Navy victories, “well fought” draws, or glorious (if unsuccessful) defiances of “overwhelming odds”; also, while some single-ship and even boat actions are included, others are not, and the opponent must have been another vessel. As the author points out in his introduction, the loss in December 1941 of Force Z (HMS *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*) is disqualified on both of these counts, and yet it was a crucial event for the Pacific War and the history of naval warfare.

Accordingly, to this book of alphabetized battle synopses (with personalia, forces, and brief narrations) Thomas has added whole chapters of engagements not accorded honors but that are of historical significance, as well as actions not properly “battles”—such as the Dunkirk evacuation and the (German) “Channel dash.” He has also chosen single representative examples of categories whose instances are too

numerous to list (the patrol of the submarine *E-11* in June 1915). There are also sections on single-ship and boat actions, the Fleet Air Arm, and the Royal Marines.

David A. Thomas, who served in the Royal Navy in World War II, is the author of some sixteen books of naval and social history. Illustrations, index, and selected bibliography.



Boatner, Mark M., III. *The Biographical Dictionary of World War II*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1996, repr. 1999. 733pp. \$24.95

Mark Boatner, a graduate of and former history professor at the U.S. Military Academy, is the author of two earlier references, *The Civil War Dictionary* and *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. The present work is aimed primarily at professional (that is, noncasual) users—especially researchers, but also editors, librarians, teachers, and students. (The issuance of this paperback reprint makes clear how valuable such readers found the original book.) The main section comprises entries of various lengths (by Boatner, many vetted by specialists) on a thousand individuals about whom the target readers are likely to need information; the entries cross-reference to a supporting glossary of specialized terms, and to a bibliography.

How did he pick the thousand names his serious users would wish to find?—largely by a “semantic count,” that is, of “hits” in the indexes of standard and specialized histories. To the resulting list, pared down to a manageable length, he added names from

slighted categories (notably Soviet and German commanders) as well as a number urged by specialist consultants.



Chambers, John Whiteclay, II, ed. in chief. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999. 916pp. \$60

The value of an "Oxford Companion" reference can be essentially taken for granted, and its self-description can be accepted at face value: "Drawing on the most current scholarship in the field and in a number of cases advancing that scholarship, *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* provides a comprehensive, one-volume guide to the study of war, peace, and the military throughout American history." Its entries (over a thousand) are distributed among the categories of "Historical Action and Events," "The Armed Services," "Weaponry and Material," "State and Society" (including rebellions and civil-military relations), "Law and Ethics," "Dissent" (including conscientious objection, antiwar movements and protests), "Popular Culture and the Military" (with references to film, music, even oratory and fashion), and biographies. Dr. Chambers, of Rutgers University, has been assisted by a panel of advisers (the likes of James McPherson), four editors (Fred Anderson, Lynn Eden, Joseph T. Glatthaar, and Ronald H. Spector), a consulting editor (G. Kurt Piehler), and some five hundred contributors (many of them distinguished, even famous) from a wide variety of disciplines. Maps, tables, index.



Morris, James M., and Patricia M. Kearns, comps. *Historical Dictionary of the United States Navy*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998. 405pp. \$85

The bulk of this look-up work, number 4 of Jon Woronoff's "Historical Dictionaries of War, Revolution, and Civil Unrest" series, is a reference for U.S. Navy ship types and classes, and individual ships "that played an important role"; aircraft and airship types; major weapons; secretaries of the Navy, chiefs of naval operations, and other individuals with "particularly important roles"; and significant battles—all covering the entire history of the service. The entries are brief but supported by cross-references, an extensive bibliography, glossaries of abbreviations and ship designations, a chronology, and a brief overview of U.S. naval history. Dr. Morris, professor of history at Christopher Newport University, is the author of several books on U.S. military history; Ms. Kearns is head of bibliographic control at the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary.



Lewis, James A. *Neptune's Militia: The Frigate South Carolina during the American Revolution*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 1999. 235pp. \$39

James Lewis, who teaches history at Western Carolina University, believes that the frigate *South Carolina*, in its two-year career late in the American Revolution, left a bigger paper trail than any other warship of the era. That is probably true, because nothing in its existence was simple. First, it was not

even a warship of the federal government but of the state of South Carolina. Even in that sense, it was not “naval”—the ship (built in Holland as *L’Indien*) had been bought, fitted out, manned, and commissioned in 1780 essentially as a private speculation, to generate prize money for its (absentee European) owner. The logistical and technical demands of any such ship—this one was among the largest of its rate—were massive, constant, and complex, and *South Carolina* had no supporting infrastructure at all. Everything had to be done from scratch or done without, bought and paid for (or not), argued about, and generally done over again. The ship did capture a

number of prizes, but not enough, and therefore it led a pillar-to-post, hand-to-mouth existence, always cadging stores and repairs, always plagued by dissension and insubordination among its oversized and undertrained crew, and threatened in every port by litigation, bad faith, and manipulation. It must have been something of a relief finally to be captured by the Royal Navy in December 1782, hours out of Philadelphia—leaving human and financial loose ends that fill the last four chapters of Professor Lewis’s book. It is an astonishing story. Maps, appendices.